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UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 000965

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR AND WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA WILL FOLLOW EU LEAD ON VENEZUELA HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

REF: STATE 223273

Sensitive - please protect accordingly

1. (U) On October 20, Poloff delivered reftel points to Deputy Director of the Human Rights Department Peter Bircak. Bircak stated that the EU will discuss the issue of human rights in Venezuela next week at the Human Rights and Democracy Committee under the European Commission. He offered to relay any relevant information about potential EU statements after the meeting.

2. (SBU) Poloff pointed out that the Venezuelan NGO, SUMATE, was facing criminal charges due to cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which actively supported Slovak NGOs throughout the 1990s and in the 2002 parliamentary election. Bircak responded that the Human Rights Section of the Slovak MFA has traditionally focused on individual rights, i.e. discrimination and minority concerns, and has not played a large role in formulating EU human rights statements for countries outside the OSCE mandate. One area in which the MFA acknowledges it should be more involved is election-related concerns worldwide. There is increasing domestic interest in exporting Slovak expertise in election observation and support for democratization.

3. (SBU) Comment: Slovakia does not have an embassy in Venezuela and does not have direct interests there. Unlike human rights issues in Cuba -- where Slovakia has historical ties, an embassy, and an active policy to promote human rights (septel) -- Slovakia will follow the EU lead on what to do about Venezuela.

THAYER

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